AN EVALUATION OF GERARD LANGBAINE

THE CRITIC

By

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PREFACE

Unlike other Master's candidates I have chosen to study a minor literary figure who published only two notable works. Dr. David S. Berkeley's numerous behests to write an original paper about a small matter and to cover the matter completely has prompted me to take this strategy. I was further encouraged when in the course of my research I discovered that a noted Dryden scholar had so feared the effect of Langbaine's criticism of Dryden that he misrepresented the evidence.

My heart-felt thanks go to Dr. Berkeley who not only provided the idea for this thesis but who also forced me to hone the idea into a presentable form. I am indebted to Dr. Samuel Woods, Jr. who in a single afternoon taught me the value of the verb and increased my understanding of that elusive thing, style. I would also like to thank Dr. William Wray for his critical and stylistic comments.

I must also acknowledge the assistance that Ms. Ranay Due, Ms. Debi Embrey, and Mr. Robert Hasenfratz have provided. At one time or another each has listened to my pedantic arguments or offered some advice about my awkward sentences. No list of acknowledgments would be complete without mention of my family who, though distant, have

offered moral support throughout my college career. Foremost, I wish to thank my wife, Leesa. She has pampered me during the writing of this thesis, and she has grown with me during my last year of Master's work.

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I

Gerard Langbaine the younger is one of the most obscure figures in English literature. He has come to be regarded as a critic, but his true value lies in his ability as dramatic bibliographer. He was born in the parish of St. Peter-in-the East, Oxford, on 15 July 1658. His father, Gerard Langbaine the elder, was an antiquarian at Oxford; and young Gerard, after tutoring and a brief apprenticeship to a bookseller, followed his father's lead. After his elder brother's death his mother called him back from his apprenticeship. He ran through a good portion of the estate which his father and elder brother left, but he then settled down and made a modest living writing. In 1690 Langbaine was elected inferior beadle of arts at Oxford, and in January of the following year he was elected superior beadle of law.[1]

Langbaine had what Anthony A. Wood calls a "natural and gay geny" for dramatic poetry (Athenae Oxonienses, col. 364). He attended plays when he could and collected "above Nine Hundred and Fourscore English Plays and Masques, besides Drolls and Interludes."[2] During his lifetime, he revised a catalogue compiled by Francis Kirkman and published it anonymously under the title An Exact Catalogue (1680). After this

endeavor he published two more catalogues of his own compilation: A New Catalogue (1688), more commonly known by its false title Momus Triumphans, and An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691). It is from the introduction to the second and the essays in the third of these catalogues that Langbaine gains the title of critic.

In Momus Triumphans he describes what he regards as plagiarism and gives an example from his period: unfortunately, that example was the poet laureate, John Dryden. His criticism of Dryden apparently prompted the spurious title Momus Triumphans, a presumptuous title for what someone considered to be a presumptuous attempt to tell dramatic poets how to write. His third catalogue, An Account, enlarges on his preceding catalogue by enumerating, in greater detail, the plagiarisms of the "Modern" playwrights.

Though some critics regard Langbaine's criticism as the result of personal animosity, I think that a convincing argument can be offered: Langbaine's criticism is a reasoned one, based on classical principles. My study will begin with a close examination of the three catalogues and a review of the criticism, then move to a discussion of Langbaine's view of plagiarism and the foundations of this view in classical criticism, and demonstrate Langbaine's reasoned criticism at the end.

II

Langbaine's first catalogue appears to be a revision of an earlier work compiled in 1661 by Francis Kirkman, a London bookseller, and was published anonymously under the title An Exact Catalogue of All the Comedies, Tragedies, Tragicomedies . . . (1680). In 1931, W. W. Greg first mentions An Exact Catalogue, but he attributes it to Langbaine's first publisher Nicholas Cox and calls Momus Triumphans Langbaine's first catalogue.[3] Later, in 1944, Greg notes that Langbaine refers to his "former catalogue printed in 1680" on page thirteen of An Account.[4] He points out that 1680 must be a misprint for 1688, the year Momus was published, or that Langbaine must have been responsible for the anonymous 1680 catalogue which he had formerly attributed to Cox; Greg decides that the latter instance is the case. In early 1945 Hugh MacDonald supports Greg's assumption.[5] MacDonald notes two additional places in An Account where Langbaine refers to An Exact Catalogue: "both in Mr. Kirkman's and my former Catalogue printed in 1680" (p. 395) and "my Catalogue printed in 1680" (p. 409).

While An Exact Catalogue is merely a revision of Kirkman's earlier edition with new plays added, Momus Triumphans is Langbaine's first critical statement about the Modern, i.e., the seventeenth-century, method of writing plays. In the preface Langbaine lists the reasons for a new catalogue: the earlier catalogues are out of print,

full of errors, and unmethodical. He also proposes to list all of the plays published in the English language and enumerate their borrowings, or plagiaries, from other languages. It is in this preface that he also singles out Dryden as an exemplar of all that is bad in Modern dramaturgy. Through machinations which we can only conjecture about, Langbaine's original title-page was switched for a spurious one when he left the manuscript with the publisher, and thereby he was made the butt of a practical joke. The spurious title page runs,

> Momus Triumphans: / or, the / Plagiaries / of the / English Stage; / Expos'd in a / Catalogue / of all the / Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, Masques, Tragedies, Opera's, Pastorals, Interludes, &c. / both Ancient and Modern, that were ever yet Printed in Eng- / lish. The Names of their Known and Supposed Authors. / Their several Volumes and Editions: With an Account of / the various originals, as well English, French, and Italian, as / Greek and Latine; from whence most of them have Stole their Plots.? By Gerard Langbaine Esq; / Indice non opus est nostris, nec vindice Libris: / Stat contra dicitq: tibi tua Pagina, Fures, Mart. / London: Printed for Nicholas Cox, and are to be Sold by him in / Oxford. MDCLXXXVIII.

According to Anthony A. Wood (Athenae Oxonienses, col. 365), five hundred copies with the spurious title page were sold before Langbaine's attention was drawn to the forgery. He then had the remainder of the impression issued with a new title page and an advertisement in which he disclaimed the earlier edition. The revised edition's title page runs

> A New / Catalogue / of English / Plays, / containing all the / Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies,

> Opera's / Masques, Pastorals, Interludes, Farces, &c. / Both Ancient and Modern, that have ever yet / been Printed, to this present Year, 1688. / To which, are Added, / the Volumes, and best Editions; with divers / Remarks, of the Originals of most Plays; / and the Plagiaries of several Authors. / By Gerard Langbaine, Gent. / Indice non opus est nostris, nec vindice Libris: / Stat contra, dicitq; tibi Pagina, Fur. es. Mart. / London, / Printed for Nicholas Cox, and are to be Sold by him in / Oxford. MDCLXXXVIII.[6]

In the advertisement Langbaine said that he is not responsible for "the Heathenish Name of Momus Triumphans" nor for the designation of "Squire: a Title, no more my due, than that of Doctor, is to a Mountebank."[7] James Osborn conjectures that Dryden's fellow poets at Will's Coffee House were responsible for the joke,[8] and Hugh MacDonald suggests that Langbaine might have been a little ashamed of the first title-page and invented the excuse.[9] Whether the playwrights at Will's or Langbaine himself is responsible, we shall not know until other evidence is forthcoming.

Langbaine's third catalogue, An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691), was published only a year before his premature death and represents his attempts to go beyond the work of Momus. In Momus he is content to list plays under authors and indicate types of drama and sources, but An Account offers a brief account of the author's life and writings, a complete description of the title-page of each play, the sources of plays founded on history, and the sources of plays founded on romances and foreign plays. He lists nearly a thousand titles and provides short accounts

of over two hundred authors. Aside from the obvious merits of the volume due to Langbaine's contemporaneity with most of the authors mentioned and what John Loftis calls his aim at "an encyclopedic completeness,"[10] it has served as a repository for the notes of later dramatic bibliographers. A. Watkin-Jones gives a complete summary from the various bibliographers who annotated and interleaved their copies of the work and their criticisms and praises.[11] Watkin-Jones quotes Edmund Malone's statement that he is much impressed with Langbaine "because he had actually in his possession almost 1,000 plays and masques" (p. 78). Both Watkin-Jones and W. W. Greg, in his 1919 article "Notes on Dramatic Bibliographers," point out that one of the most appealing attributes of Langbaine is his honesty; the former says that "when he knew practically nothing of an author he said so frankly" (p. 78).

For all of its merit, An Account still has many weaknesses. What Watkin-Jones calls Langbaine's humor at engaging in a diverting literary game, other critics regard as flippancy and take him to task accordingly. Watkin-Jones thinks that the popularity of An Account during the eighteenth century was largely due to the attitude that Langbaine should be corrected. He notes that Thomas Percy states in his interleaved copy that "Langbaine's Work would have been more valuable if he had everywhere set down first editions and endeavored to ascertain the time when each play was brought upon the stage. But neither of these has

he professedly done; the editions referred to, being such as he happened to have in his possession. This is a perpetual source of confusion to such writers as heedlessly quote him and occasions constant anachronisms in their compilations" (p. 77). William Oldys is terser: "A woeful Chronologist art thou, Gerard Langbaine" (p. 77).

In the most recent piece of criticism, Albert Tricomi notes Emil Koeppel's earlier refutation of five of Langbaine's sources for Chapman's Tragedy of Chabot and Koeppel's inability to identify the entry "Mart. LLongeus" in An Account.[12] Tricomi tries a different method; by using the "Langeus" as a title and not a surname, he is able to identify Guillaume and Martin Du Bellay's Memories as Langbaine's sixth source.[13] He also observes that though Memories is important, it does not contain some of the historical details and postulates that another source is yet to be discovered.

Perhaps the most revealing piece of contemporary criticism is the 1919 interchange between Allardyce Nicoll and George Newall. Nicoll thinks that Langbaine and, subsequently, Gildon and the Biographia Dramatica erred by calling Piso's Conspiracy identical to Nathaniel Lee's Tragedy of Nero.[14] He notes that Langbaine calls Piso's Conspiracy "only the Tragedy of Nero . . . Reviv'd and printed verbatim" and that Gildon amplifies this statement by announcing that "Piso's Conspiracy is no more than the Tragedy of Nero, with a Title chang'd, and if you compare

them, will find no difference throughout." Nicoll uses Gildon's comment and offers elaborate proof that the two plays are in no way similar. George Newall counters Nicoll's article by pointing out that when Langbaine says, in that part of An Account which deals with unknown authors, that "Piso's Conspiracy . . . is only the Tragedy of Nero (before mention'd)," he is not referring to Lee's tragedy, which is not by an unknown author and is attributed to Lee on page 324, but he is referring to Nero's Tragedy mentioned on page 542.[15] Though this seems to be an innocuous example of a critical misjudgment, Nicoll's elaborate attempt to prove that Langbaine is in error is influenced by an attitude that many critics share with him: they regard Langbaine as careless and slipshod. Langbaine's greatest advantage is that he had access to the earliest editions of the plays, some of which are unavailable to his successors.

While some regard Langbaine as the father of dramatic bibliography, most critics regard him as a vindictive critic whose bitter remarks about Dryden are prompted merely by personal animosity. The first comment made which intimates that Langbaine is an unsound critic comes from Charles Gildon who revised Langbaine's Account in 1699. In the preface to the revision which he titled The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets, Gildon says,

> Mr. Langbain seems every where to gratify some private Pique, and seldom to regard the Merit of the Person he reflects upon . . . . He often commends Shirley, Heywood &c. and will

> scarce allow Mr. Dryden a Poet; whereas the former have left us no Piece that bears any Proportion to the latter; the All for Love of Mr. Dryden, were it not for the false Moral, wou'd be a Masterpiece that few of the Ancients or Moderns ever equal'd . . . .[15]

After Gildon, critic after critic refers to Langbaine's hatred and animosity. In his edition of Dryden's Works Sir Walter Scott refers to "the malignant assiduity of Langbaine" for accusing Dryden of stealing his plots.[16] In his article "'A Little Civil Correction': Langbaine Revised," G. L. Anderson says that Gildon "substituted critical for Langbaine'[17] orn is the most vocal of t ine's remarks "lack any preten " (p. 237), and that "Langbaine 238). In discussing Langbaine' e most recent editor of An Acco yden is "Langbaine's enemy" (p. e based on Langbaine's derogatory 's plays and Gildon's charge that some private Pique." Langbaine r nor does he express hatred of D appears that these critics hav ithout further examining L and those who do quote from Langbaine's criticism o gbaine has so many negative things to say about Dryden, he must have disliked him. Osborn observes that about one-tenth of the entire

volume is devoted to Dryden (p. 234). It should be considered that Dryden was a prolific writer and naturally deserved more space; of the forty-seven pages, twenty-five are devoted to accounts of Dryden's plays.

In the previously mentioned 1965 work John Dryden: Some Biographical Facts and Problems, James Osborn builds an argument to explain Langbaine's supposed hatred: he points out Langbaine's criticisms of Dryden and postulates that Langbaine believed Dryden was responsible for the spurious title page of Momus Triumphans. Early in the book Osborn quotes Gildon's comment about Langbaine's "private Pique" and notes that An Account is loaded "with abuse of Dryden" (p. 6). What Gildon was implying during his lifetime and Osborn is implying in 1965 is that Langbaine never commends Dryden but always heaps abuse on him. In An Account Langbaine exercises his "slender judgement" of Dryden's merits by saying that

> His Genius seems to me to incline to Tragedy and Saytr, rather than Comedy: and methinks he writes much better in Heroicks than in blank Verse. His very Enemies must grant that there his Numbers are sweet, and flowing. (p. 131)

He also says that Dryden improves Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida: "The last scene in the third Act is a Masterpiece, and whether it be copied from Shakespear, Fletcher, or Euripides, or all of them, I think it justly deserves Commendation" (p. 175). Langbaine observes that Dryden's Tyrannick Love has hints of material borrowed from other

authors "but much improved" (p. 176). From the assertions of Gildon and Osborn, these laudatory remarks are very much out of character, but Langbaine makes them frequently; apparently they have not examined all of Langbaine's work.

In the section "Dryden and Langbaine" Osborn postulates that Langbaine abused Dryden because he believed Dryden responsible for the spurious title-page of Momus Triumphans that had been given to his 1688 catalogue. As support for his theory, Osborn quotes Langbaine's praise of Shadwell and states that Langbaine had a personal animus based on his allegiance to Shadwell. Osborn continues by saying that "He [Langbaine] became settled in the belief that Dryden had fathered Momus Triumphans" (p. 237). He also cites an allusion from the preface of the Account to the 1688 catalogue, "the Malice and poor Designes of some of the Poets and Agents, to destroy its Reputation, (by printing a spurious Title-page, and an uncorrected Preface)" and an allusion to Dryden "who professes he has not stollen half what I then accused him of." Summarizing his views, Osborn says that Langbaine's charges of literary plagiarism "lack any pretense of being reasoned criticism, and they were recognized by others as the product of personal hatred" (p. 237).

First, Langbaine's praise of Shadwell is hardly unqualified.

> . . . indeed I cannot wholly acquit our Present Laureat from borrowing; his Plagiaries being in

> some places too bold and open to be disguised, of which I shall take Notice, as I go along. (p. 443)

Second, Osborn offers no specific evidence that Langbaine held Dryden responsible for the spurious title-page other than the linking of the two allusions, already mentioned, taken from the preface to An Account; it should be noted that the two allusions are five pages apart in the preface and not presented juxtaposed as Osborn has them. Osborn's failure to indicate this five-page gap between the two passages misrepresents the evidence. Third, even though Osborn claims that others recognized Langbaine's criticism as being the product of personal hatred, he does not tell us who these others might be. He provides a footnote that reiterates Gildon's comment and that cites the Moderator of 23 June 1692, which G. L. Anderson states "is certainly by Gildon and is a kind of preface to his edition of the Lives" (p. 266).

Next, Osborn notes that Langbaine was a defender of the ancients in the Ancients versus Moderns controversy. He quotes Langbaine's remark in An Account that he would "proceed to the Vindication of the Ancients . . . I present my self a Champion in the Dead Poets Cause, to vindicate their Fame" (pp. 134, 133). Taken out of context these lines seem to indicate that Langbaine is attempting to defend the ancients in the controversy, but if we go a little further (p. 134), Langbaine states that he "shall set down

the Heads of his Dryden's Depositions against our ancient English Poets, and then endeavour the Defence of those great Men, who certainly deserve better of Posterity, than to be so disrespectively treated as he [Dryden] used them." The Ancients which Langbaine wishes to defend are Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Jonson, who are considered to be Moderns in the Ancients and Moderns controversy. In Momus he says that he desires his "Readers leave to take a View of Plagiaries in general, and that we may observe the different proceedings between the Ancients and our Modern Writers." Here again the word Ancients appears; judging from Langbaine's use of the word, he is making a temporal distinction--ancient or classical writers as opposed to modern or contemporary writers--and not a qualitative one. In the latter instance, he is referring to authors who antedate his period--presumably, though not necessarily, classical authors; in the former instance, he uses "Ancients" to indicate the veneration in which he regards the three authors. Though one could infer that Langbaine's use of "Ancients" in the Account indicates authors who follow the ancient tradition in the controversy, I cannot definitely ascertain that Langbaine intended his use of "ancient" to be construed as a reference to the controversy.

III

What Langbaine means when he uses the word "plagiaries" becomes more significant when we examine a passage from Momus.

> I desire my Readers leave to take a View of Plagiaries in general, and that we may observe the different proceedings between the Ancients and our Modern Writers. This Art has reign'd in all Ages, and is as ancient almost as Learning it self. If we take it in its general Acceptation, and according to the extent of the word, we shall find the most Eminent Poets (not to move excentrically and out of our present Sphere) are liable to the charge and imputation of Plagiary. [p. 7]

Here Langbaine seems to be referring to the ancient art of imitation as opposed to the modern plagiarism; this assumption is confirmed when immediately following he delineates what we understand to be the practice of imitation--the copying of another's writings.

> But let us now observe how these Eminent Men manage what they borrow'd; and then compare them with those of our times. First, They propos'd to themselves those Authors whose Works they borrow'd from, for their Model. Secondly, They were cautious to borrow only what they found beautiful in them, and rejected the rest. Thirdly, They plainly confess'd what they borrow'd, and modestly ascrib'd the credit of it to the Author whence 'twas originally taken. Lastly, Whatsoever these Ancient Poets copyed from any Author, they took care not only to alter it for their purpose; but to add to the beauty of it: and afterwards to insert it so handsomly into their Poems, (the body and Oeconomy of which was generally their own) that what they borrow'd seem'd of the same Contexture with what was originally theirs. [pp. 8-9]

After making these points, Langbaine outlines the modern practice of imitation which is "diametrically opposite in all things." This seems to be the crux of the misunderstanding from which Langbaine has suffered; he is not accusing Dryden of plagiarism because each play is not an original work, but because Dryden is not following the classical or ancient principles of imitation. After we have carefully examined the ancient practices of imitation, we shall be able to understand Langbaine's critical remarks about Dryden's work.

The best proof that Langbaine is not condemning the copying of another's work occurs in the preface to Momus. "For indeed, provided the Author shew Judgement in the heightning and working up of his Story, it matters not whether the Play be founded on History or Romance, or whether the Story be his own, or another's Invention" [p. 6]. This statement, among his comments on plagiarism, should indicate that Langbaine is judging Dryden on the basis of imitation. This imitation is the act of one writer copying another; it is not Aristotle's mimesis. Mimesis is the basis for Aristotle's Poetics and is usually translated as "imitation" or sometimes the "representation of Nature."[18] Harold Ogdin White notes that the Poetics do not discuss whether or not the classical authors imitated literary models.[19]

The practice of imitating another's work which Langbaine refers to is widely accepted and encouraged by

the Roman authors. In Institutio Oratoria, Quintilian writes,

> For there can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in imitation, since, although invention came first and is all-important it is expedient to imitate whatever has been invented with success. And it is a universal rule of life that we should wish to copy what we approve in others.[20]

Longinus states that imitation is the road to sublimity and that "Zealous imitation of the great historians and poets of the past . . . is the aim, . . . and we must hold to it with all of our might."[21] White points out that this is not just imitation of spirit but imitation of "subjects and material as well" (p. 4). Further evidence shows the acceptance of the practice of imitation of models in that "there is scarcely a tribute to an author in classical [Roman] times which does not praise his imitation of some other author" (White, p. 4). Longinus praises Plato "who has irrigated his style with ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring" (p. 169). Quintilian devotes a section of Institutio Oratoria to the praise of Roman imitations of Greek literature.[22] Macrobius gives a very elaborate study of Vergil's borrowings from Homer and others in his Saturnalia, and he does not indicate any disapproval.[23] He says that "the reward of one's reading is to seek to rival what meets with one's approval in the work of others and by a happy turn to convert to some use of one's own the expressions one especially admires there" (p. 385).

Langbaine follows the Roman conception of imitation. In Momus Langbaine refers to classical authors who would choose a literary model and only borrow what they found beautiful; we can follow White's example and call the careful choice of model and material selection. In De Oratore Cicero recommends that boys in school should faithfully imitate a single model, and in De Optimo Genere Oratorum he points out that by imitating Demosthenes one can achieve eloquence.[24] He also says in De Inventione that he collects everything written about his subject from a number of authors and imitates the best from each author.[25] Quintilian confirms that Cicero not only imitated Demosthenes but also Isocrates and Plato. He argues against imitating a single model and suggests that extreme prudence be exercised in deciding which author to imitate and what to imitate by that author (pp. 81-83, 85-89).

One of Langbaine's major complaints about the modern authors is that of imitation without acknowledgement. Osborn defends the practice of borrowing in Dryden and quotes from the preface to Don Sebastian where Dryden echoes Horace's Ars Poetica (ll 131-135), "The Materia Poetica is as common to all writers, as the Materia Medica to all physicians" (Osborn, p. 239). This is fine as far as it goes, but it does not take care of Dryden's occasional failure to acknowledge the original work. The Latin playwright Terence openly acknowledges his debt to a Greek original in five of his prologues, and he names the Greek author in three. In the prologue to The Self-Tormentor, Terence's spokesman admits

that the author has combined a number of Greek plays to make a few Latin ones and "asserts that he will do it again. He has an excellent precedent, and feels that he's justified in doing what other honorable men have done."[26] We have already noted that Cicero admits to following a number of authors. In De Rerum Natura Lucretius acknowledged his debt to Epicurus in the opening of books three and five;[27] Horace and Propertius also acknowledge what they have borrowed.[28] These authors were proud of their imitations and wanted them recognized. In an anecdote about Ovid, Seneca the Elder states that "Ovid had very much liked [a] phrase [from Vergil]: and that as a result the poet did something he had done with many other lines of Vergil--with no thought of plagiarism, but meaning that his piece of open borrowing should be noticed."[29]

Finally, Langbaine observes that what the ancients borrowed was not only altered for their purposes but also fitted into their work so that it seemed to be a part of the original. This is what White calls reinterpretation and improvement (pp. 9-11). The object of alteration is to borrow another's idea and reshape it through one's own experience. Isocrates points out that the lowest form of imitation is merely recounting "the things of old in a new manner or set forth events of recent date in an old fashion."[30] In its highest form this reinterpretive element of imitation, Quintilian states, produces a work which "seems to come into being as the very child of nature."[31] When they discussed

this process, these classical authors often used the figure of a bee. Thus, just as a bee combines and alters what it gathers, the writer should "so blend . . . whatever he has gathered from a varied course of reading . . . into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless, is clearly a different thing from that whence it came."[32] In this process of reinterpretation, the writer should improve the borrowed material. Isocrates' goal is "to speak better" than anyone else has and he encourages his contemporaries to "study how [they] may surpass [him] in speaking on the same question" (p. 241). And Quintilian says that imitators should "improve on the good things" of the authors they borrow from and "rival and vie with the original in the expression of the same thoughts" (pp. 82-83, 114-115).

IV

The greatest problem with the critical remarks in An Account is that Langbaine, like most of his contemporaries, apparently uses the words "imitation," "borrow," "copy," "translate," "transverse," "found," and "steal" indiscriminately. If each separate use of these different words is examined, it becomes obvious that Langbaine does not use these terms with any great precision, but that he only uses them for their connotative values. The words "imitation" and "borrow" carry a positive connotation and imply that the author in question follows the patterns of classical Roman imitation. "Copy" and "found" are applied descriptively to works where the author has taken the story from a history or it is otherwise universally known. "Translate" is used in works which are rendered from another language and the author admits them to be such. "Transverse" seems to carry a negative connotation and indicate that the author has merely taken a prose work and made it verse or vice-versa. "Steal" is reserved for those authors who do not observe the conventions of Roman imitation: either they do not admit that their work is borrowed or they do not improve and alter what they have borrowed. Unfortunately, where Langbaine will in one instance call a particular work "borrowed," in another seemingly similar instance he will call a work "stollen." In his account of John Corey, Langbaine says that Corey "stole" his play The Generous Enemies from the works of

Fletcher, Randolph, Corneille, and Quinault; but when Langbaine enumerates the specific works from which Cory "stole," in each instance he uses the word "borrow" (pp. 73-74).

Aside from this flaw, much evidence strongly suggests that Langbaine uses the principles of Roman imitation in his critical remarks and that his judgment, though "slender," is well-tempered. Most critics, as we have observed, seem to think that Langbaine is only concerned with discovering a poet's source; thus Sir Walter Scott calls Langbaine's accusations that Dryden stole his plots "malignant assiduity." Yet these critics fail to notice Langbaine's claims in the Account that he has not "anywhere accus'd the Poets in general or Mr. Dryden in particular; for borrowing their Plots; knowing that it is allowed by Scaliger, M. Hedelin, and other Writers" (pp. 161-62). According to Roman principles, poets must borrow subjects, ideas, and plots from other authors in order to imitate correctly. Langbaine makes other comments that indicate his recognition of this feature of Roman imitation. In another case, Langbaine says that "Dryden has likewise borrow'd from the Greek and Latine Poets, as Sophocles, Virgil, Horace, Seneca, &c. which I purposely omit to tax him with as thinking what he has taken to be lawful prize" (p. 149). Here Langbaine refers to the materia poetica which Dryden himself mentions in the preface to Don Sebastian. In these two instances Langbaine indicates that Dryden is not guilty of

borrowing plots; what he has done is within the bounds of imitation.

A reference to the Wild Gallant in the Account provides us with the necessary point of distinction. "The Plot [Dryden] confesses was not originally his own, but however having so much alter'd and beautified it, we will do him the Honor to call him the Author of the Wild Gallant" (p. 175). The key words in this passage are "alter'd" and "beautified"; these two words indicate that Dryden did more than copy from his source--he improved and reinterpreted what he borrowed. This is exactly one of the classical principles. When Langbaine gives an account of Dryden's Troilus and Cressida, he says that the play was revised from Shakespeare's play "to which he added several new Scenes, and even cultivated and improv'd what he borrow'd from the Original. The last Scene in the third Act is a masterpiece, and whether it be copied from Shakespeare, Fletcher, or Euripides, or all of them [Langbaine thinks] it justly deserved Commendation" (p. 175). Likewise, in his account of Tyrannick Love, Langbaine says that he finds several hints of material borrowed from other authors "but much improved" (p. 175). Again, Langbaine uses terms that let us know Dryden has imitated correctly.

If Langbaine commends Dryden for his correct imitation, then we would naturally suspect that it is Langbaine's criticism of Dryden's incorrect imitation that leads critics to attack him for calling Dryden a "plagiarer." He makes a

general statement about improvement and alteration in the Account:

> But tho' the Poet be allow'd to borrow his Foundation from other Writers, I presume that the Language ought to be his own; and when at any time we find a Poet translating whole Scenes from others Writing, I hope we may without offence call him a Plagiary; which if granted, I may accuse Mr. Dryden of Theft. (p. 162)

In other places in the Account, however, Langbaine is more specific about Dryden's failure to comply with the principles of imitation. When referring to All for Love, Langbaine observes that Dryden has not altered what he found in Shakespeare. He also instances Much Ado About Nothing in which

> The Bastard accuses Hero of Disloyalty before the Prince, and Claudio her lover: who (as surprised at the News) asks, Who! Hero? Bast. Even she, Leonato's Hero, your Hero, every Mans Hero. In this Play, on like occasion, where Ventidius accuses Cleopatra, Antony says, Not Cleopatra! Ven. Even she my Lord! Ant. My Cleopatra? Ven. Your Cleopatra; Dollabella's Cleopatra; Every Mans Cleopatra. (p. 153)

By presenting the two passages together, Langbaine demonstrates that Dryden has not improved upon Shakespeare's lines, but he has merely copied them. Langbaine cites passages from Milton's Samson Agonistes (p. 157) and Seneca's Hippolitus (p. 156) which Dryden has neither altered nor improved. In addition to incorrect imitation of his fellow countrymen, he points out that Dryden "is for the most part beholden to French Romances and Plays, not only for his

Plots, but even a great part of his Language" (p. 132). Langbaine cites Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery as being taken from French romances, and he says that the Conquest of Granada is also taken from French, as well as Italian, romances. He notes that Dryden employs the art of transversing and rewrites in rhyme what he has borrowed from other sources. His tone in this instance indicates that this change improves on the original. He says that in The Conquest of Granada Dryden "has borrow'd the description of his Bull-feast from Guzman's Juego de Toros and Cannas . . . the description of the Factions . . . is borrow'd from Almahide," and he points out that several of the King's speeches are taken from Almahide (p. 159). In this instance we are able to determine that Langbaine is using "borrow" with a negative sense only by the context of his statements.

Finally, we must consider Langbaine's remarks which have to do with the selection of the model and Dryden's writings. The classical authors encouraged their students to choose only the best authors and imitate only an author's best writings. In this case Langbaine is critical of Dryden because he does not select an author which he esteems. In Momus Langbaine expresses his displeasure with the modern playwrights who serve "French Kickshaws" in place of Roman wit as "Regales of their own Cookery; and yet they themselves undervalue that very Nation to whom they are oblig'd for the best share of their Treat" [p. 9]. He observes that Dryden "runs down the French Wit in his Marriage a la Mode,

and steals from Molliere in his Mock Astrologer" [p. 9]. Thus Langbaine's charge is that Dryden is not choosing the French playwrights as models; if he were, he would not be condemning their style. In the Account he elaborates on Dryden's attitude: "yet I cannot observe withal; that he has plunder'd the chief Italian, Spanish, and French Wits for Forage, not withstanding his pretended contempt of them" (p. 149). In addition Langbaine draws from Dryden's preface to The Conquest of Granada for additional proof:

> I shall never subject my Characters to the French Standard; where Love and Honour are to be weigh'd by Drams and Scruples: yet, where I have design'd the patterns of exact Virtue, such as in this Play are the Parts of Almahide, of Oxmyn, and Benzaida, I may safely challenge the best of theirs. (p. 132)

He then points out that Dryden has taken all of the characters in the play from the French play Almahide.

Langbaine thinks that the height of arrogance is Dryden's "taxing others with stealing Characters from him . . . and for arraigning his Predecessours for stealing from the Ancients, as he does Johnson; which tis evident that he himself is guilty of the same" (p. 131).

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Langbaine is a critic more often cited than read; the majority of critics think that he regards a source in a play as a fault. However, Langbaine's comments in the preface to Momus indicate that he does not quickly dismiss a play based on history, a romance, or another's idea. Langbaine evaluates a play on whether or not the author has properly imitated his model, and he exactly defines what proper imitation is. Exact parallels are evident between the Roman conception of imitation of models and Langbaine's definition of proper imitation. Because Langbaine is imprecise in his use of terms, we cannot say that he definitely meant to use the words "borrow," "imitate," or "steal" in their twentieth-century sense whenever he uses them, but considerable strong evidence suggests his adherence to the Roman principles of imitation of models as propounded by Longinus, Quintilian, and others. Langbaine is often harsh and vigorous, and not unbiased, in his remarks; however, his critical remarks cannot be dismissed out of kind. According to the evidence presented here, Langbaine follows a system derived from Roman practices, and though some critics think his comments result from personal animosity toward Dryden, his remarks in An Account demonstrate a reasoned and balanced account of Dryden's plays.

ENDNOTES

[1]Anthony A. Wood, Athenae Oxonienses (1813; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), IV, Col. 367.

[2]Gerard Langbaine, Momus Triumphans (1688; rpt. Los Angeles: Augustan Reprint Society, 1971), [p. 1]. All future page references will occur as parenthetical citations.

[3]W. W. Greg, "Additional Notes on Dramatic Bibliographers," in Collections, ed. W. W. Greg, 2, part 3 (1931). 235-236.

[4]W. W. Greg, "Gerard Langbaine the Younger and Nicholas Cox," The Library, 4th Series, 24 (June-September 1944), 68.

[5]Hugh MacDonald, "Gerard Langbaine the Younger and Nicholas Cox," The Library, 4th Series, 24 (1944-45), 186.

[6]Anthony Wood cites the complete advertisement in footnotes to columns 365 and 366 (Athenae Oxonienses).

[7]James M. Osborn, John Dryden: Some Bibliographical Facts and Problems (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1965), p. 236.

[8]Hugh MacDonald, "The Attacks on Dryden," Essays and Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), xxi, 67.

[9]John Loftis' introduction to the Augustan Reprint Society's Gerard Langbaine, An Account of the English Dramatick Poets (1691; rpt. Los Angelos: Augustan Reprint Society, 1971), p. i. All future parenthetical citations will be to the Burt Franklin facsimile published in 1969.

[10]A. Watkin-Jones, "Longbaine's Account of the English Dramatick Poets," Essays and Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), xxi, 75-85.

[11]Albert Tricomi, "Langbaine's Unidentified Source for Chapman's Chabot Identified," Notes and Queries (1976), 215-216.

[12]In his article Tricomi equates "Langens" with "LLongens." "LLongens" appears in the Account and the double "L" is an old practice which indicates a capital.

[13]Allardyce Nicoll, "The Tragedy of Nero and Piso's Conspiracy," Notes and Queries, 137 (1919), 254-57.

[14]George Newall, "The Tragedy of Nero and Piso's Conspiracy," Notes and Queries, 137 (1919), 299-300.

[15]Charles Gildon, ed., The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets (London: Printed for Thomas Leigh and William Turner, 1699), [p. 1].

[16]Vol. II, p. 292. Quoted from A. Watkin-Jones' article "Langbaine's Account of the English Dramatick Poets," p. 79.

[17]G. L. Anderson, "'A Little Civil Correction': Langbaine Revision," Notes and Queries, 203 (June 1958), 266-69.

[18]S. H. Butchers' definition of "imitation" in his essay "Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and The Fine Arts" is that "a work of art is a likeness . . . or reproduction of an original . . . ." S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed. (1907); rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1951), p. 124.

[19]This is a summary of what Harold Ogden White says in a more diffuse manner in Plagiarism and Imitation During the English Renaissance, Harvard Studies in English, XII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 4-19. Hereafter referred to by parenthetical citation.

[20]Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, trans. H. E. Butler, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), IV, 75.

[21]Longinus, On the Sublime, trans. W. Hamilton Frye. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 167.

[22]Quintilian praises Roman imitations in book X, Chapter 1, sections 85-131, pp. 49-75.

[23]Macrobius devotes the major portions of books five and six of the Saturnalia to an examination by parallel citation of Vergil's imitations. Macrobius, The Saturnalia, trans. Percival Vaughan Davies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

[24]Cicero, De Oratore, trans. E. W. Sutton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), I, 477. De Optimo Genere

Oratorum, trans. H. M. Habbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 365.

[25]Cicero, De Inventione, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 169-171.

[26]Terence, The Comedies of Terence, trans. Frank O. Copley (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), p. 219.

[27]Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, ed. William Ellery Leonard and Stanley Barney Smith (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1942), pp. 421-424, 645-647.

[28]Horace, Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1942), Satires, i, 10; ii, 1. Propertius, Elegies i-iv, ed. L. Richardson, Tr. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), pp. 102-103, 120-121.

[29]Seneca the Elder, Suasoriae, trans. M. Winterbottom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 545.

[30]Isocrates, Panegyricus, trans. George Norlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 122-124.

[31]Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, trans. H. E. Butler, II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 367.

[32]Seneca, The Epistles of Seneca, trans. Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), vol. II, 277-79.

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